



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Smokey Bear celebrates 65th birthday ***Reminding Americans that... "only you can prevent wildfires"***

FRANKFORT, KY (Aug. 5, 2009) – Gov. Steve Beshear, along with the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) and Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF), recognized one of America's beloved icons today. The governor officially proclaimed Sunday, Aug. 9, 2009, as Smokey Bear Day in Kentucky in an effort to celebrate Smokey Bear's 65th birthday and provide critical information about wildfire prevention.

Since his "birth" on Aug. 9, 1944, Smokey Bear has been a recognized symbol of conservation and protection of America's forests. His message about wildfire prevention has helped to reduce the number of acres burned annually by wildfires, from about 22 million (1944) to an average of 7 million today. However, wildfire prevention remains one of the most critical environmental issues affecting our country. Many Americans believe that lightning starts most wildfires. In fact, on average, nine out of 10 wildfires nationwide are caused by people. The principle causes are campfires left unattended, debris burning, senseless arson, careless discarding of smoking materials or BBQ coals, and operating equipment without spark arrestors.

Smokey Bear has been communicating his well-known message, "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires," since 1944. In 2001, he introduced the term 'Wildfire' to include all unwanted, unplanned fires in natural areas such as grass fires or brush fires. Today, his campaign continues to be a critical tool specially designed to ask for every citizen's commitment to be responsible with fire.

"Smokey Bear is one of the longest-running and most successful public service advertising campaigns in our country's history," said Leah MacSwords, director of KDF and president of the National Association of State Foresters. "His message has helped forestry agencies across the U.S. raise awareness about wildfire prevention," she added.

The Wildfire Prevention campaign was developed in partnership with the Ad Council, a private, nonprofit organization that marshals talent from the advertising and communications industries, the facilities of the media, and the resources of the business and nonprofit communities to produce, distribute and promote public service campaigns on behalf of nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

Smokey and his wildfire prevention campaign continue today as a partnership between the Ad Council, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. The Ad Council will be distributing new public service announcements (PSAs) to media outlets nationwide. Per the organization's model, the new Smokey Bear PSAs are airing and running in advertising time that is donated by the media. KDF and DBNF are encouraging media outlets throughout Kentucky to provide support for the new ads.

For more information about wildfire prevention efforts or Smokey Bear PSAs, contact the Kentucky Division of Forestry at 1-800-866-0555 or visit the Smokey Bear Web site at www.smokeybear.com.

Editor's note:

The Kentucky Division of Forestry is the state agency responsible for preventing and suppressing wildfires on state and private land. Its mission is to protect and enhance the forest resources of the Commonwealth.

The USDA Forest Service is the agency responsible for overseeing the use of Smokey Bear in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the Ad Council. The Daniel Boone National Forest consists of 707,000 acres of national forest property in eastern and southeastern Kentucky. Its mission is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area in western Kentucky is also managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

The National Association of State Foresters is a nonprofit organization that represents the directors of the state forestry agencies from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. The State Foresters provide management assistance and protection services for over two-thirds of the nation's forests. As a partner with the USDA Forest Service, State Foresters are committed to the continued delivery of Smokey Bear's message of personal responsibility in wildfire protection.